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Dolgan

Akademiia nauk SSSR. Institut
Etnografii.

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THE PEOPLES OF SIBERIA

Edited by

M.G. LEVIN and L.P. POTAPOV

[Title page]

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO PRESS

CHICAGO AND LONDON

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THE DOLGANS

A. A. POPOV

General Information

101 The Dolgans comprise the basic population of the Taymyr National Okrug. At the present time the Dolgans speak a particular dialect of the Yakut language. They stem from groups of different origin. The nucleus of the Dolgans was made up of 4 clan groups of Tungusic origin—the Dolgans, Edzhens, Karyntuos and Dongots.

The Dolgans call themselves Dulgaan. This name, which is the name of one of the clan groups, was extended to cover all Dolgans in the 19th century, although, many of them still called themselves until recently by the name of the group to which they belonged. Hence they previously did not have any common name for themselves. In the Noril'sk region some Dolgans called themselves tya kisite (which means "man of the forest" in Yakut) or tege (meaning "tribe" or "people" in Evenk). The Dolgans sometimes used the name Tungus but distinguished themselves from the local Evenks in the Taymyr and the Evenk National Okrugs. They do not consider themselves Yakuts and are ethnologically distinct from the latter.

[161] The number of Dolgans was 1224 in 1897, and 1445 in 1926-27. From the beginning of the 20th century, in addition to the "true" Dolgans, this nationality also included other Yakutized groups (so-called tundra peasants and local Evenks) as well as some of the Yakuts living in the same region. In actual fact the entire indigenous population of the Avamskiy and Khatangskiy Rayons, with the exception of the Nganasans and the Evenks living south of the Kheta River and its sources, and the entire indigenous population of the Noril'sk-Pyasina Rural Soviet of the Dudinskiy Rayon in the Taymyr National Okrug can be considered Dolgans. Small groups of Dolgans also live on the Yenisey in the Dudinskiy and Ust'-Yeniseyskiy Rayons.

614 Before the Revolution the Dolgans formed the following administrative "clans" headed by clan elders or "princelings:" Dolgan-Yenisey (Dolgan proper), Dolgan-Tungus (Dongot), Zhigan-Tungus (Edzhen) and Boganid-Tungus (Karyntuo). The Yakuts who merged with the Dolgans formed the Lower Tundra "Clan" Administration, and to some extent became part of the Betu (Chordu) and other naslegs.

197 The Dolgan language is a dialect of Yakut and contains Evenk words. The closeness of the Dolgan dialect to the Yakut language decreases as we move from east to west.

175 According to Russian sources, in the 17th century the territory settled by the present-day Dolgans was occupied by ancestors of the Nganasans.
101 The above-mentioned groups, which later formed the core of the Dolgan people, lived at that time in regions comparatively far removed from the Taymyr: the Dolgan group occupied regions near the mouth of the Vilyuy

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and Muna on the Lena; the Edzhen group lived on the lower reaches and the Dongot group on the upper reaches of the Olenek. The ancestors of the Karyntuo probably also lived on the Olenek.

Clans with the name Dolgan and Edyan (Edzhen) were commonly found among the Evens and Evenks. For example, Dolgan clans are known in the regions of the Anadyr' and Gizhiga, on the Kamchatka and Okhotsk coast; Edzhen clans are known in the Aldan Basin, around the Ayan on the Okhotsk coast, and so on.

During the 18th century the ancestors of the present-day Dolgans migrated to the northwest, the Dolgan groups moving to the rivers Popigay and Khatanga, the Dongot and Edzhens to the Noril'sk Lakes region, and the Karyntuo to the Boganida River basin. Those left on the Lena became part of the local Yakut naslegs as separate clans.

The first Yakut settlers appeared at the end of the 17th century in the Khatanga Basin on the river Kheta, and from then on the influx continued to increase. In the 18th century these Yakuts formed into the Lower Tundra Yakut Volost.

Even before the Yakuts—at the beginning of the first half of the 17th century—the rivers Pyasina, Dudypta, Boganida, Kheta, and Khatanga were settled by Russian hunters and trappers who founded the ancient Russian population of these places, subsequently known as tundra peasants. They were chiefly concerned with fishing, and to a lesser extent with hunting. It was from them in particular that the Dolgans and Nganasans learned to set pitfall traps for the polar fox. The influence of their Russian neighbors has long been evident in the dwellings and everyday life of the Dolgans, that is to say, during the migration to the Taymyr.

During the 18th and 19th centuries the gap between the culture and everyday life of the different groups of the population in this territory began to narrow. The Yakut language became predominant and was absorbed not only by originally Tungus groups, but also by a large number of tundra peasants. Intermarriage swept away the former barriers between the Evenks, Yakuts and Russians to an ever greater extent.

The system of tsarist administration was no different here from what existed in any other part of Northern Siberia. The Dolgans, Yakuts and Evenks had to pay the fur-tax as "natives" and formed "clans" headed by princelings, while the tundra peasants were forced to pay a poll tax, were formed into a "community" and headed by an elder. People living many hundreds of kilometers away from the nearest centers were economically dependent on the merchants who monopolized supplies to the region, bought up all the furs, and cruelly exploited the population.

Economy and Everyday Life

The main occupations of the Dolgans of the past were reindeer-breeding, hunting, and, in certain regions, fishing. Until quite recently the Dolgans were still leading a nomadic life. Their nomadizing was basically of two types. In the region of the Noril'sk Lakes and in the basin of the Popigay, they retained a more archaic system of nomadizing and did not leave, generally speaking, the forest-tundra belt, but kept to the forest-covered river valleys in the winter, and wandered back to the bare steppes for the summer. The winter camps of other groups of Dolgans stretched along the forest-tundra belt from Lake Pyasino to the lower reaches of the Popigay. These were typical "edge-of-the-forest" dwellers. The winter was spent in the forest-tundra with slight deviations south of the northern boundary of the forest vegetation, while the summer was passed in the tundra,

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somewhat to the north of this boundary. The migration from winter to summer camps and back was made in the spring or fall. 221

In winter, the families of Noril'sk and Popigay Dolgans lived apart from one another, often singly. The remainder still continued to nomadize along the northern edge of the forest and formed the chain of "stations" of the winter Noril'sk-Popigay highway; this consisted of groups of 5-10 households, some of the stations comprising groups of permanent dwellings. But since reindeer require frequent change of pasture, the camps of separate families and the entire stations, and the reindeer-herders living in the Russian-type houses as well, had to change their place of residence several times during the course of the winter. 361 221

As spring approached and the camps broke up, the Dolgans formed into nomadic groups. These groups were combined on a territorial basis and were bound by common economic interests. Associations of this kind meant that a smaller number of herdsmen was required for the reindeer since it took fewer people to look after a large herd than several small ones. In the spring, as soon as the grass appeared, and in the summer, during the season of the mosquitoes and other harmful insects, the Dolgans watched their herds the whole day through, appointing sentries from each household in turn. The nomadic Dolgans wandered along lakes, rivers and mountains. In the autumn, when the insects disappeared, each group of nomads divided up once more into separate families, which then nomadized in the region of their polar-fox traps, setting them again for the winter, or else hunted singly for wild reindeer until it was time to go back to the camps. [233]

The reindeer-breeding of the Dolgans combined the traditions of the Tungus breeding for purposes of riding, with devices and techniques borrowed from the herders of the Samoyedic groups. Thus, the Dolgans used reindeer both for riding and carrying (in summer) and at the same time made extensive use of reindeer sled-teams (in winter). But even in the first half of the 19th century the Dolgans in some parts only used their reindeer for riding. The various types of sleds are fundamentally similar to the Nennish and Nganasan types, but they also have the Yakut type with its low, straight staves. The harnessing technique differed from that of the Nentsy; the lead reindeer is harnessed and controlled by the rein on the right, whereas among the Nentsy, Entsy and Nganasans the lead reindeer is harnessed and controlled by the left-hand rein (it should be noted in this connection that the Evenks and Dolgans, even when riding reindeer, mount from the right and also guide it from the right). The system of milking reindeer, typical of the Evenks, was retained by the Dolgans; like the Nentsy and Nganasans they also used herd dogs. The saddles and riding techniques of the Dolgans were of the Tungus type. 233 177 492 [171]

The Dolgans hunted polar fox, wild reindeer and various wildfowl including duck, geese and partridge. Until quite recently they still used bows and arrows for the purpose, obtaining them from the Kets, via the Russians, and also from the Yakuts and southern Evenks. The Dolgans also had self-triggered bows for killing reindeer, which they set up in the forest preserves east of the Khatanga. According to legend, in the remote past the Dolgans used to hunt reindeer with slings and throwing-arrows. 224 [173]

The Dolgans attributed great importance to collective reindeer spearing in the autumn at river crossings, and to various hunting techniques with guns (which replaced the old bow and arrow). In the winter, the animals were hunted by means of specially trained decoy reindeer. In the winter they hunted reindeer with guns and bows and arrows almost entirely by the chasing technique: 4 strong reindeer were harnessed to a light sled and the herd was trailed for hours on end. Another form of winter hunting

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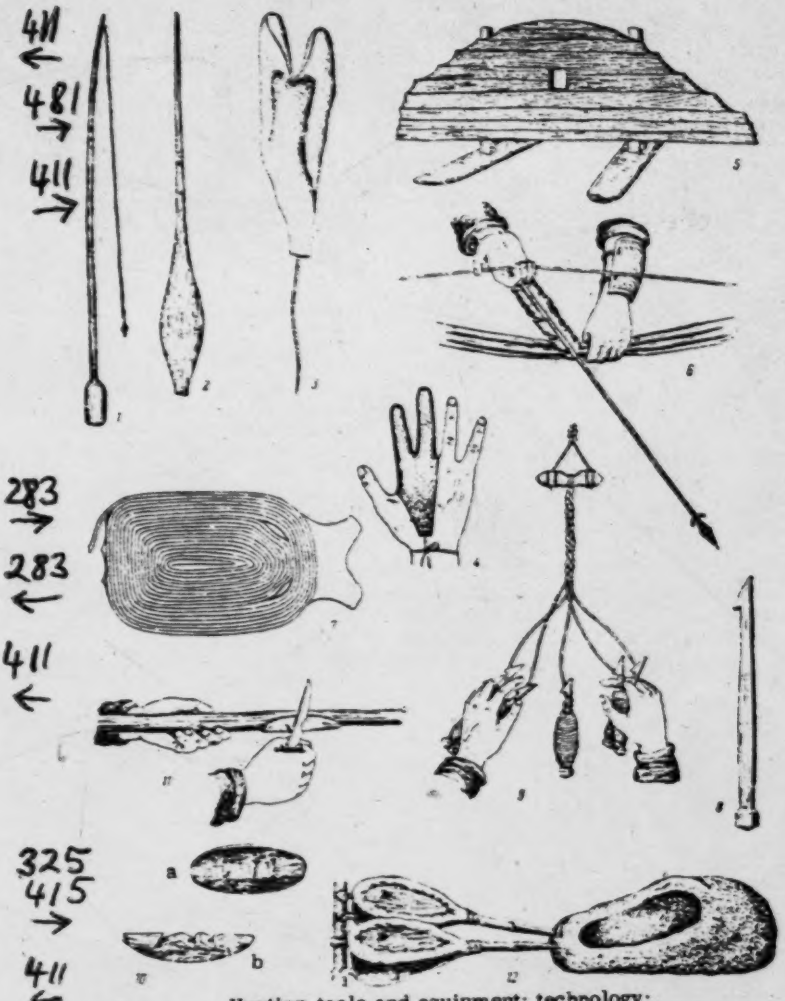

Hunting tools and equipment; technology:
1—flexible stick with cord for releasing a throwing arrow; 2—wooden throwing arrow; 3, 4—glove worn for archery; 5—shield on skis for hiding the hunter; 6—method of protecting the hand during archery; 7—method of cutting a spiral strip from reindeer-skin; 8—wooden hook for braiding lasso; 9—method of braiding lasso; 10a, b—wooden knife holder with holes for blades; 11—method of using knife holder; 12—clay kiln with blacksmith's bellows.

involved concealment: the hunters skillfully approached the herd behind a shield erected on runners. In the winter the hunters put on white coats with chestpieces made of white dogskin, enabling them to crawl over the snow

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towards the reindeer in complete silence, and in summer they wore a protective gray coat the color of the stony tundra. Both in summer and autumn, until the first snow fell, the Dolgans used to trail wild reindeer with hunting dogs. They used poisoned bullets, and probably poisoned arrows as well in the past. As the poison they used rancid reindeer fat. The Dolgans living in the forest-tundra had wide skis of the Tungus type, but they could not use them in the tundra on account of the drifts.

Hunting wild reindeer was only of importance as a source of meat and skin for the Dolgans' own semisubsistence economy.

For catching geese they set traps or arranged noose-type snares by the nests, and also drove moulting geese into nets set up in advance or harried them with dogs and then killed them with sticks. Ducks were trapped with special nets stretched across lakes. Partridges were also caught this way, though only in winter. Sometimes a live female partridge was tied to the net as bait.

Polar-fox hunting was of quite considerable economic importance and produced the principal commercial yield. The animals were mainly caught with traps and snares. As it seized hold of the bait, the fox pulled away a stick and released a log which fell onto it. The principle of this trap was borrowed from the Russians; up to that time they had only set self-firing bows on stakes driven into the ground to catch the animals.

The commonest type of fishing tackle both in summer and winter under the ice was an upright net 6–30 m long. The nets were made of threads or horsehair brought from Yakutya. In the Noril'sk Rayon the nets were used in the autumn in mountain rivers. The draught animal employed for this purpose was the reindeer and the ropes from the net were attached to its saddle. Other types of nets were used to a very limited degree. Seines were also commonly used for sterlet, burbot, pike and grayling and trout with hooks prefabricated from bent 10–cm nails. Burbot was also caught with special bone points instead of hooks.

For traveling by water, mainly for fishing purposes, there were tree-trunk canoes brought by the merchants from the Yenisey, or bought from the Yakuts. There were few boats; it was only on the rivers Pyasina and Khatanga that they were used.

The Dolgans subsisted mainly on meat and fish. These were boiled or dried and the fish was also eaten in the raw, frozen and unfrozen forms. Fish was also kept in pits where it was pickled. Dead geese were kept buried in the ground. Certain roots were also eaten; they were dug up with reindeer horns or special wooden trowels.

The old type of nomadic dwelling among the Dolgans was the conical Tungus-type tent covered with thin panels of suede (in the summer) and deerhide (in the winter). In the old days the Dolgans, like the Evenks, built huts of the Yakut type, but without the windows, benches and hearth.

With the advent of the Russians the huts were gradually ousted by sled-tents or baloks. These are little huts on runners. The framework consists of wooden struts tightly covered with bright-colored calico, and on top, to keep it warm, there is a layer of deerskin and a canvas cover to guard against damp. In this kind of dwelling there are two windows with glass, an iron stove, bunks, a table, and sometimes even chairs. Whereas the erection of a pole tent required a great deal of labor during the cold winters, this type of tent can simply be pulled along the ground to a new site. These tents were borrowed in the last century from Russian merchants who traveled in them through the tundra.

Among other structures we should point out storehouses standing on high piles for keeping winter clothing and utensils.

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Hunting:
1—hunter with decoy reindeer; 2—hunting wild reindeer from behind a shield; 3—catching partridge with nets.

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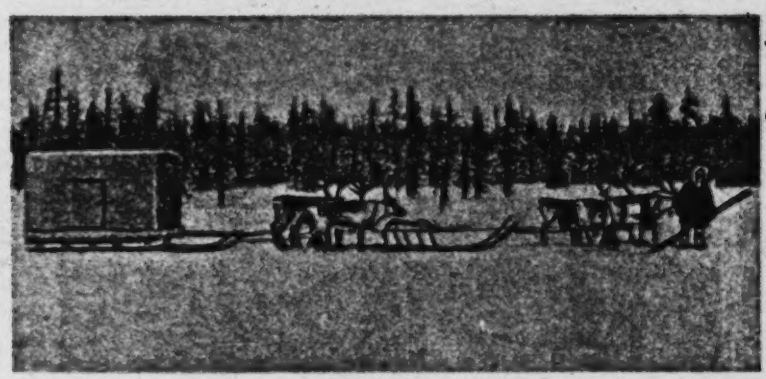

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Winter dwelling, sled tent.

There are more than a dozen versions of the Dolgan national costume, all with their special names, though only different in a few trivial details. The characteristic feature of both men's and women's clothing is a slightly elongated coattail at the back. The Dolgans themselves explain this by the fact that when sitting down on the cold ground in a tent they can spread out the long coattail underneath them. 291

Even before the Revolution household clothing for men and women was made of bought material. Men wore shirts and trousers of the Russian style, and women wore dresses, on top of which they put on aprons without openings. Both the men's shirts and the women's aprons almost always had side pockets and were embroidered with narrow colored piping and numerous buttons. They did not wear any underclothing. 291 177

In the summer and winter men and women wore a cloth coat called the sontap. In the winter they wore a second fox-fur or hareskin coat beneath it. In the winter instead of the cloth coats they sometimes wore the deerskin open dokha (parka) or short coat, and ventless fur clothing with a hood with the fur outside, i.e., the sokuy. When traveling the men wore a sokuy over their cloth coat or deerskin parka. In rainy summer weather a cloth sokuy was put on. In the winter the women wore a son or long polar-fox or hareskin coat, on top of which they had a sontap or sangyyak (deerskin coat). Men and women girdled their clothing with bead-studded belts. The mukalkaan, a bead-embroidered men's parka, was close to the Even type. The old-fashioned men's and women's aprons were also similar to the Even type. Men's and women's hats (bergese) were shaped like hoods. The top was cut from fox feet or from cloth, and was embroidered with beads or finished with narrow bands of colored cloth. Winter footwear was made of deer feet and came in two types: a type reaching to the knee or higher, corresponding to the Evenk boot and often ornamented with beads. 291 [531]

Summer footwear was made of suede. A hole was made in the middle of the sole in summer footwear so that any water leaking inside during walking could run out.

Social Relations and Religion

By the time the Russians arrived, the Dolgans were splitting up into clans. Kinship was reckoned on the male side. There were certain traces 614 611 600

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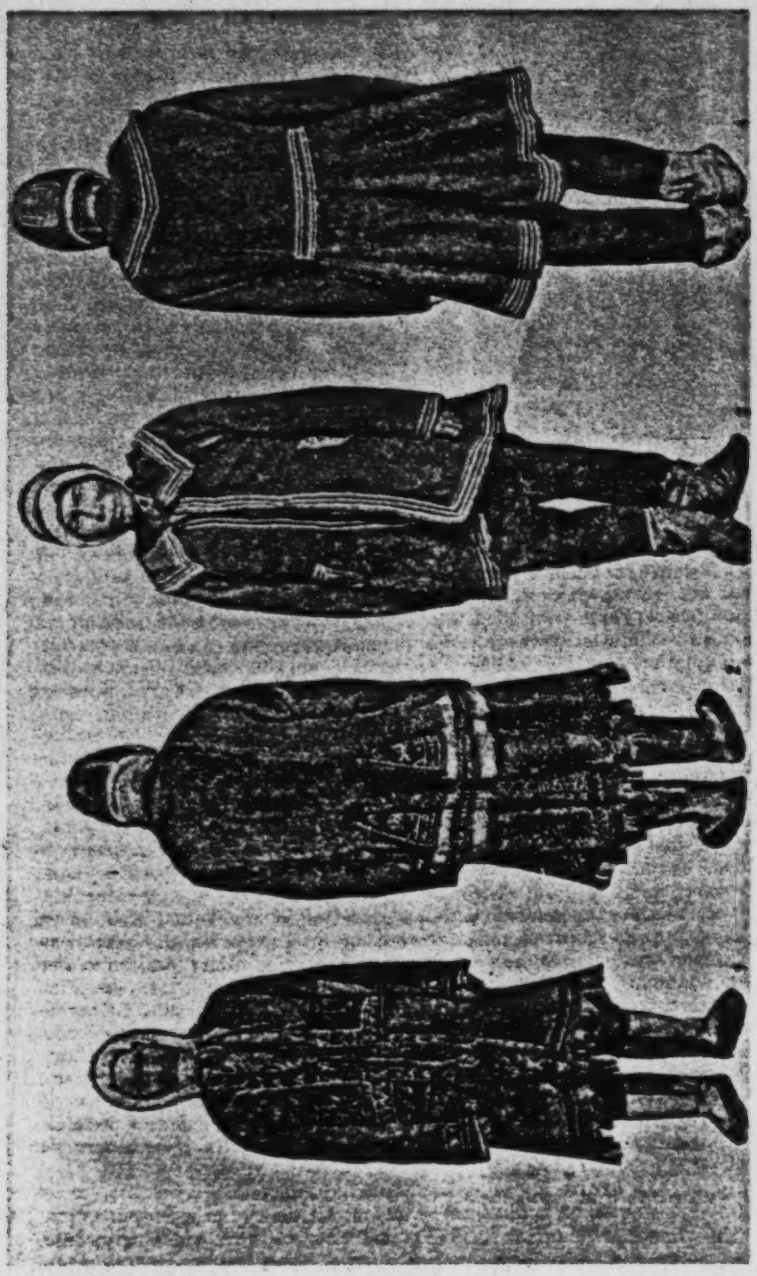

Men's clothing:
1, 2—winter; 3, 4—summer.

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Men's snow goggles.

There were certain traces of matriarchy still to be found. For example, in the old times several Dolgan families living in one dwelling would elect a communal housewife, to whom all the men were subordinate. Until quite recently, maternal kinship was considered closer than paternal kinship among the Dolgans. The women kept the fire going and "fed it," and also supervised the family sacred relics. Clan organization among the Dolgans fell into abeyance in the 19th century.

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The development of trade and the introduction of improved techniques into the principal occupation of the Dolgans, that is to say hunting, led to the acquisition of furs on a personal level. Furs had long been an item of trade. Their commercial importance had an effect on the relations among the Dolgans in the field of distribution. Products from reindeer-hunting or fishing had to be divided among relatives and neighbors, while furs (polar-fox or sable) were considered the absolute property of the hunter and were left untouched. An important factor in the social differentiation of the Dolgans was the concentration of the bulk of the reindeer herds, which were not particularly numerous as a whole, in the hands of a small group of rich households. This became a basis for different forms of exploitation: such as the loaning of reindeer to poor people who then became dependent on the richer reindeer-breeders, the hiring of herdsmen, mainly orphans or poor relatives, and so on. Nomadic groups were often formed through the congregation of poorer households around a richer reindeer-breeder, who made use of his neighbors' labor for pasturing and watching the herd. In the second half of the 19th century petty Russian commercial travelers appeared among the Dolgans, together with Yakut merchants who exploited their kinsmen.

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Nevertheless, the economic production and distribution among the Dolgans retained numerous traces of the original communal relationships. This includes the above-mentioned collective forms of hunting (cuttings, spearings), joint fowling, fishing and so forth. Although the means of production for hunting and fishing had long since become private property, the booty

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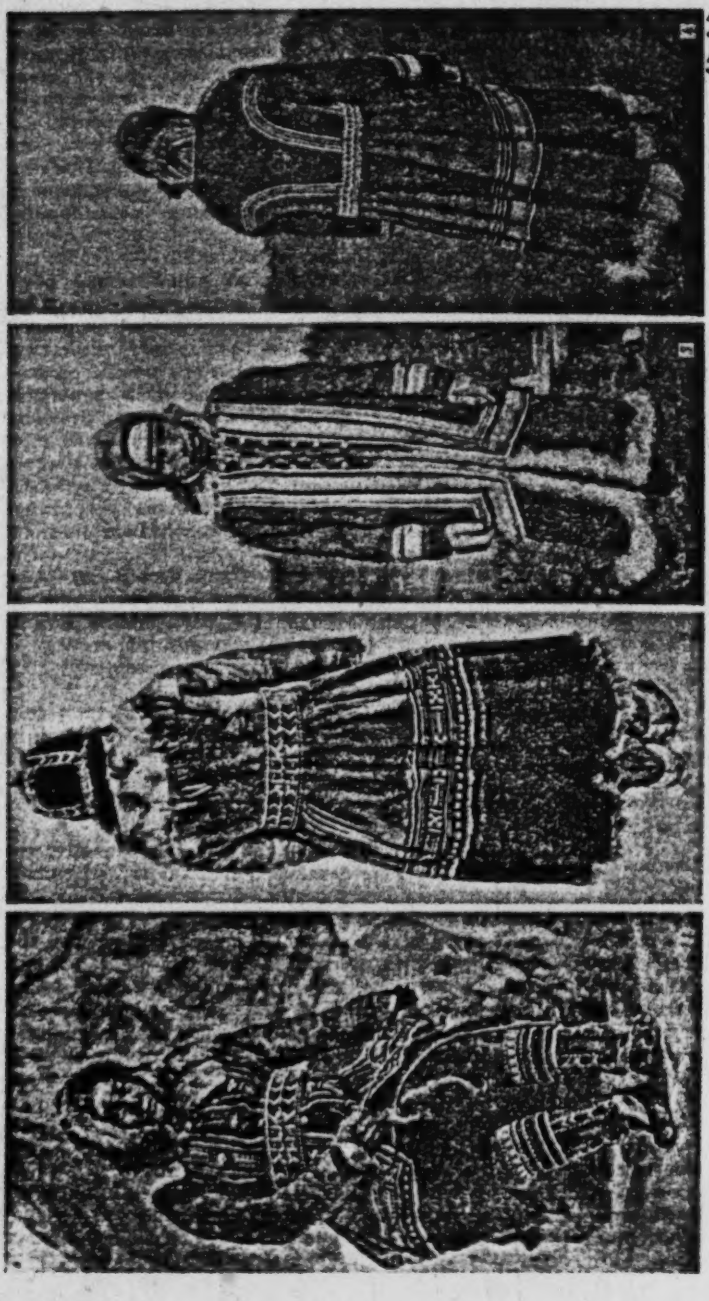

Women's clothing:
1, 2—winter; 3, 4—summer.

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421 was considered collective property, particularly in summer when several
224 households nomadized together. Having killed a wild reindeer, the hunter
226 was expected to give up the skin and meat to the families of his group, but keep the head and neck for himself. During the collective trapping of geese or spearing of wild reindeer a representative was chosen to make the division, and everything caught was divided up by families, according to the number of members.

224 The sites to be used by the nomadic groups for their summer hunting and fishing were decided in the spring, before the mosquitoes appeared. The heads of the groups would agree on the places where their own kin would hunt. Under this system each group hunted in new areas each year. Ownership of the polar-fox traps took a different form. The traps were private property. When setting new traps "behind" (i.e., to the south of) the old ones, no permission was required, but if they were set "in front of" the old ones (to the north), whence the polar fox came, it was essential to have the permission of the owner of the old traps, since when the foxes came down, they would be caught chiefly in the new ones. It was not forbidden to hunt other animals at the sites of the traps.

601 The system of kinship among the Dolgans was the classificatory type,
882 and the terms used for kinship were Yakut. The family was of the patriarchal type, but the young people enjoyed great freedom until they married.

771 Although the Dolgans were considered Christians and observed the ex-
776 ternal, ritualistic aspects of Russian Orthodoxy, they also retained their old animistic beliefs. Deities and spirits were divided into three categories (the same as for the Yakuts): ichchi, or incorporeal, invisible beings, who brought to life anything which they entered; ayyy or spirits well-disposed towards humans; abaasy or spirits hostile towards humans and causing various sicknesses and misfortunes; these lived in the earth and in the underworld. A person was believed to get sick and die because the abaasy had stolen his soul and carried it away to the underworld, and then, in-
756 vading the person, proceeded to eat him. The guardians of the people
[171] against the wicked spirits and mediators between humans and spirits were the oyun or shamans. The shaman garb and tambourine among the Dolgans were the same as among the Evenks.

In their religion the Dolgans worshipped the so-called saytaans. The
776 saytaans could take a great variety of forms, for example, a stone of unusual shape or an ugly wild-deer antler. Any object could be a saytaan if a shaman commanded a spirit, ichchi, to enter it. The saytaans were greatly revered both as family and hunting patrons.

764 The Dolgans buried their dead in the ground. The western (Noril'sk)
[531] Dolgans did not usually erect a log structure over the grave, but only left a mound of earth onto which they felled a tree. The eastern Dolgans built log structures over the grave, which they often embellished with intricate carving. A reindeer was slaughtered near the grave and the clothing in which the deceased had died was either left on the ground or hung on the tree.

Folklore

538 The indigenous folklore of the Dolgans was represented by riddles, tales, historical legends, epic poems and stories of everyday life—the latter constituting the predominant type. The stories tell of the nomadic life of the Dolgans in all its real, everyday context. They are brief, but extremely varied in content. Very popular were stories of animals—their origin, their metamorphosis into people and back again. A particular group was composed

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Women's chestpiece embroidered with colored beads.

of tales called ustuoruya (from the Russian word "istoriya" or history), in which the heroes were Russian merchants, poor state-owned peasants, Ivan Tsarevich and other characters from Russian fairytales. Their plots are also close to those of the Russian tales. The historical legends tell of journeys to strange countries and the unusual adventures involved. Some of them are close in content to the legends of the Olenek Khosun epic.

Both in theme and in method of narration, the epic tales were very close to the Yakut olonkho and were even called by the same name. They often describe a way of life alien to the Dolgans; they mention horses and cows, but hardly ever mention reindeer. Their theme is the struggle between heroes and persons consorting with evil spirits. The dialogues, just as in the Yakut epic tales, were sung. Dolgan songs are either short (lyrical) or long. The former were not performed by professionals, and the composers and performers were usually boys and girls. The long songs were performed by highly gifted improvisers or "songsters," who were relatively few and far between.

The storytellers were regarded as the elite, chosen by the good deities and spirits. Gifted storytellers created their own schools and whole generations of young storytellers studied under them. According to the old beliefs of the Dolgans, all the images drawn by the storytellers could be turned into visible images or shadows. This belief in the ability of the storyteller to re-create real images by his words was exploited by the Dolgan shamans to make their methods of "curing" the sick more convincing. Sometimes, to determine which spirit the disease had come from, the shaman would send for a storyteller. The latter would begin telling an epic tale as dusk fell. As soon as the hero of the tale began to gain the upper hand over his adversary, the spirit which had allegedly been eating the patient began to emerge to help his brother spirit. As soon as he saw the evil spirit and knew what kind it was, the shaman cast a spell, now knowing what he had to do to cure the sick person. During heavy epidemics shamans often resorted to the help of the storytellers by asking them to spend evenings telling stories in which all the adventures of the heroes had
[224] a happy ending. Since it was considered that the images in the epic tales became visible, in the spring, when the geese arrived, no stories were recounted so that the images would not frighten the geese. To avoid frightening wild deer, stories were not told on the eve of the hunt.

534 The Dolgans had no musical instruments. It was only at the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th centuries that the Yakut jew's-harp began to

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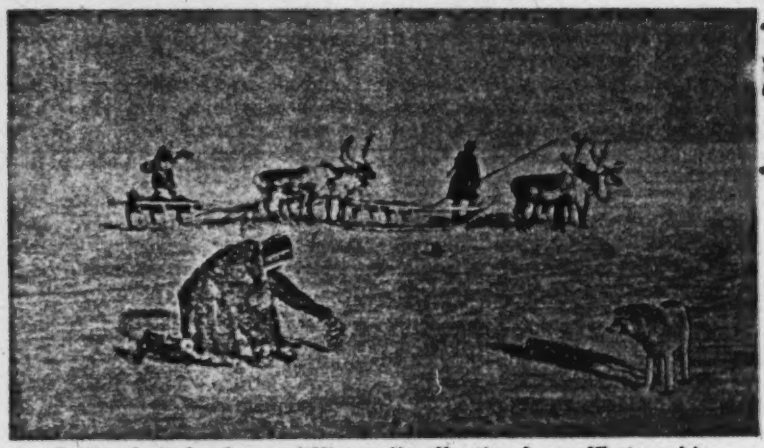

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Setting bait for foxes. "Victory" collective farm, Khatangskiy Rayon, Taymyr National Okrug.

become common. The art of dancing was practically unknown to the Dolgans. 534
Like the Evenks, they only had rounds (with the refrain "kheyro") in which 535
the men and women went round and round, leading each other by the arm 171
and stamping on the ground.

The graphic art of the Dolgans was of an applied nature. Both festive 531
and ordinary clothing was richly ornamented with beads or appliquéd with 294
narrow strips of colored material. Patterned embroidery with deerhair on
suede dyed red with an infusion of alder bark or ochre, or dyed black with
graphite, was common. Also to be found was fine openwork embroidery
with tendon thread on the straps and belts of the reindeer harness. Decorating the clothing was a job of the women. The men mainly engaged in 821
mammoth-ivory carving. They acquired a particularly high degree of skill
in carving cheek-plates for the reindeer halter. Tin-inlaid fronts for rein- 326
deer saddles and knife handles were also found. The smiths were considered to be very skilled at inlaying iron objects with copper and silver.
The runners and backs of light, low sleds common in the Khatangskiy Rayon 531
show an intriguing range of colors. Dolgan designs for the most part are
geometric; they consist of combinations of crosses, semicircles, zigzags 322
and broken lines. Wood-carving of a religious nature was also commonly
found. The representations were usually very symbolic.

The Post–Revolutionary Period in the Life of the Dolgans

[In 1926, there were already 17 cooperative stores in the Dolgan territory. 631
In 1931, the former clan Soviets were changed over and replaced by territorial nomadic Soviets, which went to make up the Taymyr Dolgan-Nennish 443
National Okrug.

(Collectivization of the Dolgans was begun in 1930-31 and completed in 474
1938. The Dolgan collective farms have collectivized reindeer herds, lines 233
of permanent polar-fox traps, supplies of portable steel springtraps, 224
firearms for hunting and protection of the herds, seines and vertical nets,
reindeer harness, sleds, buildings, and special Arctic clothing. The

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The personal property of the collective-farm members includes herds of reindeer (up to 100 head), transport equipment, vertical nets, hunting guns and hunting and fishing tackle. Reindeer-herding remains the chief branch of the economy, but is now done in accordance with good animal husbandry practice. A reindeer technician and a veterinary assistant are attached to each team, which looks after a subherd.]

The Dolgan reindeer-herders on the collective farms pasture the herds in good grazing ground, far from the herding tent by day, and as night falls drive them back to the tent. Having rested, the reindeer at midnight begin to feed near the tent; at dawn they are driven to new feeding grounds some distance away. This grazing system, on the one hand, keeps the reindeer well fed and, on the other hand, they do not stray during the night and are easy to watch. Twenty-four-hour-a-day, year-round guarding of the reindeer has become a rule in collective herding.

[The herd of reindeer is constantly growing. Thus, in the Avamskiy Rayon, the number of reindeer increased over the last five-year period, by more than 50%. The necessity of yearly migrations along the tundra from Dudinka to the Anabar has been eliminated; previously this had a most unfavorable effect on Dolgan reindeer-herding. The demand for pack-reindeer has been reduced, due to the carriage of goods into the Avamskiy and Khatangskiy Rayons by the Northern Sea Route; from here they are brought to remote inland points by steamboat or cutter. Previously, the only route connecting the Dudinka with the Avamskiy and Khatangskiy Rayons in the winter was the reindeer highway from Dudinka to Popigay. Connections are now maintained winter and summer by airplane, although reindeer transport is still of some importance. Its technology is unchanged.

[Hunting technology has been reconstructed. Traps are set in the autumn before the beginning of the blizzards. For this purpose, hunting brigades sometimes journey to the north for several hundred kilometers into the taiga, spending the nights in sled-tents with iron stoves. Hunting brigades are made up before the beginning of the season, traps being distributed on the basis of 150–200 pitfall traps and 10 springtraps per hunter. With the first snow the brigades go out into the tundra and begin to hunt wild reindeer. Foxtraps are baited with the surplus meat obtained. In the Khatangskiy Rayon alone, where the majority of the hunters are Dolgans, the collective farms during the 1948–49 season set 5000 new pitfall traps and prepared 1000 bait-pits for foxes, in which they placed more than 40 tons of bait.

[Fox-hunting begins on November 15th. Springtraps are placed by experienced hunters at places where wild reindeer have been killed in the autumn, or on the bloody tracks of wounded wild reindeer near bait-pits, or previously discovered burrows. Hunting is the main source of income for Dolgan collective farms. The previous predatory methods have gone out of use—spearings, stockades, geese nets. Fishing has become important in a number of areas. Vegetable-gardening and animal husbandry (other than reindeer) have developed on many Dolgan collective farms. The members grow chiefly radishes, cabbage and onions.

[A process of settling down the previously nomadic population is in progress. In the new settlements where the collective-farm members whose work does not make them nomadic live, dwelling-houses of the Russian type have been built, along with various other farm and public buildings. Many settlements have their own electric stations.]

The members of reindeer-herding and hunting brigades lead a nomadic life. Their families frequently travel with them. Separate nomadic groups are now set up, not on the basis of individual relations among different

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Kindergarten on a walk. Taymyr National Okrug, Khatangskiy Rayon.

families, but on the initiative of the collective-farm administration, and their routes are determined in the same way. Fishing brigades sent to fish in some river or lake lead a settled life there, partly in houses built by the collective farm at the fishing grounds.

[The Dolgans, particularly the descendants of the tundra peasants, had Russian cottages even before the Revolution. They now build sturdy houses, using both imported lumber and driftwood. The old-fashioned pole tent is now used only in the summer.

[The Dolgan diet now includes bread, flour, and tea, boiled strong and taken with sugar. Supplies are brought in regularly to the local stores. Medical aid is available at 40 medical and medical-assistant points. The Dolgan-Yakut population is served by hospitals at Noril'sk and in the settlements of Chernoye, Volochanka and Khatanga. In 1953 there were 52 schools, including 3 seven-year schools, in the Taymyr National Okrug. The Dolgan-Yakut population is served by schools at Chernoye, Dolgany, Volochanka, Kheta, Khatanga, Popigay and other points.

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871

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